

COBBETT'S WEEKLY POLITICAL REGISTER.

Vol. 33. No. 11.] NEW-YORK, THURSDAY, JULY 24, 1817. [Price \$5 per Ann. or 12½ c. per No.

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TO

THE BOROUGHMONGERS.

On the several symptoms of their approaching fall; and on the prospect before them, in case of that fall.

North-Hampstead, Long-Island,
July 16, 1817.

BOROUGHMONGERS,

It is not only natural, but it is right, for men to rejoice at the confusion of their oppressors; and, assuredly, few men have ever felt more sincere joy, than I now feel at perceiving the confusion in which you actually are, and the much greater confusion into which you will soon be plunged. The four corners of the earth will exult at your fall; but in all the four corners of the earth there will not be found a man to rejoice so heartily as I shall. The hungry and the naked, the widow and the fatherless, the captive and the slave, the dying innocent, and the reputation of the murdered, all cry aloud to heaven for vengeance on you. Your existence is a curse to mankind; and the day of your destruction will be the day of universal deliverance.

That that day is at no great distance every symptom tells me. I perceive, from London newspapers, just received, that the *Absolute-Power-of-Imprisonment Act* is intended to be renewed. It is done before now, I dare say; and, I told the people, before my departure, that it would be done. It is, probably, renewed until the next meeting of Parliament; that is to say, until there are persons assembled ready to renew it again. And so it will go on; for, never will there be even the shadow of liberty in England any more, until the House of Commons shall be reformed. No one but a most profound hypocrite

could pretend to believe, that this act ever would be repealed until the time of real Reform should come. This act, which, in fact, is the all in-all of the present system, was absolutely necessary, if reform did not take place. It was, therefore, most ridiculous in any one to pretend to disapprove of this act, and, at the same time, to disapprove of Reform; seeing that one of the two must absolutely take place; and I am astonished, or, I should be astonished, if I did not so well know the whole history and mystery of the thing, at hearing such men as Lords Grey and Holland, and Mr. Brand and Mr. Bennett opposing the renewal of the act, while they, at the same time, oppose a Reform that shall give the people who pay taxes a right to vote for those who are to impose those taxes. Do such feeble men as Mr. BRAND think that they can ever persuade the people to be satisfied with any thing short of their full rights? Do such men imagine, that the speakers at the several Reform Meetings are to be made content with the rejection of what Mr. Brand called their "*wild projects!*" No: they may be well assured, that, even if SIR FRANCIS BURDETT were to be intimidated into an association with these "moderate" gentlemen, the People would only become the more resolved not to yield a particle of their rights.

The act will continue in force as long as money can be raised to give the appearance of paying the interest of the debt. One would wonder what the views of the Parliament could be in this measure. They imagine, that the act will keep the people quiet, "*till things come about,*" I suppose. But, if any thing could add to the impediments to things coming about, it would be this act itself. Things cannot come about any more

than the Thames can come about, and run back to Oxfordshire. The very root of national prosperity is arrested in its progress. It is dried up by taxation; and the plant will daily and hourly become feebler and feebler. The *People* have nothing to do but to wait with patience. They will suffer. They must suffer. But, they will not die by millions, to please Mr. MALTHUS and his savage disciples of the high-blooded order. They must have *something to eat*. Let the *People* only wait with a little patience, and they will see "*things come about*" in reality.

It was in order that I and my family might wait with *patience*, that I came hither; for, *patient* I could not have been in *silence*, and they would not have been *patient*, while I was in a dungeon. The sort of treatment, which was in reserve for me, may be easily judged of from the following account, which I find in the London papers, relative to the treatment of the state-prisoners at Reading, in Berkshire: "In consequence of the acting magistrates for the county of Berks, having been refused admittance to the state-prisoners in the gaol of Reading, (though they were in the constant habit of visiting that gaol,) they addressed Queries to the Secretary of State for the home departments on the subject, and received answers. The following is a copy of the Queries and answers:

"(Copy.)—The visiting Magistrates of Reading Gaol wish for answers to the under mentioned Questions from the Right Honourable Secretary of State:—

"Q. May Magistrates generally of the county of Berks visit the state-prisoners in common with other prisoners, which they are privileged to do, and ask questions, and enter into conversation with them?—A. No, except upon

"special reasons being assigned, which must be submitted to, and judged of by, the Secretary of State.

"Q. If state-prisoners may have a copy of official directions to gaolers?—A. No.

"Q. If they may have free use of pen, ink, and paper, under certain restrictions, as ordered by the official directions?—A. Vide official directions, which must be strictly observed.

"Q. If they may read the Public London or Provincial News-papers, under certain restrictions?—A. No.

"Q. If they may have books to read from Circulating Libraries?—A. Such books as are approved of by the visiting Magistrate.

"Q. If they may have wine, or strong beer, or ale, in limited quantities, at their own expense, or that of government?—A. What quantity is desired?

"Q. If through the day they be confined in solitary cells, and at night in better apartments, if such can be procured by Magistrates for them?—A. To be confined in such manner as has been usual, and in such apartments as have been heretofore allotted to state-prisoners.

"In consequence of new directions sent down, the three prisoners were confined in separate rooms, after having been left all together in one apartment for a fortnight."—Ah! boroughmongers! It is much pleasanter to sit here under the shade of trees loaded with fruit, only wanting hands to gather and mouths to eat it, than to be begging of Lords Sidmouth and Castlereagh permission to breathe the sweet air! Much better amusement is it to be drying fruits in the sun to please my little boys and girls when they come, than to be peeping through the iron gates and bars of the jails, and listening to

hear whether their prayers have obtained them access to my damp and dreary cavern. Much better to be here, laughing at you, and teaching the world at once to hate and despise you, than to be hearing the distant cries of those children, who will live to see vengeance on you or on yours. Here I can read all the London newspapers, without Lord Sidmouth's leave; nor are his magistrates to *select my books for me*. No wonder that your *COURIER* was enraged at my departure! I am at once in full view of you, and beyond the reach of your dark and deep malignity. I am looking down upon you as upon a nest of insects, destined to have all your works defeated, and to be crushed, at last, amidst your fancied security. I see you hard at work, digging the pit into which you yourselves are to be tumbled; and I anticipate the pleasure of being one of those who are to tumble you into that pit. What the treatment of the unfortunate men, now shut up, is, the world will easily judge from the above document. The magistrates even are not to see them and converse with them, without special permission of the Secretary of State, upon special reasons being assigned! How happy I must have been to be an object of the *kind interference* of the magistrates! How comfortable my family must have felt at seeing a man like me an *object of compassion* with these worshipful gentry, amongst whom are the Giffords, the Bowleses, the Watsons, the Baineses, the Willises, the General Porters, the Sinecure Minchins, the Col. Fletchers, the Parson Powises, the Sellons, and the like! Oh, no! my good borough-mongers, I knew too well what was coming to let my body remain within the run of Sidmouth's and Castlereagh's warrants. That pen which had thrown you into consternation was not to be stopped without an

effort on my part to keep it in motion. I was resolved to do all that I could to enable me to combat you at home; but, at any rate, while there was an inch of free country left in the world, I was resolved still to combat you. And, to this dilemma I again tell you that you are reduced; the laws of England must still continue a dead letter; the people must all be exposed incessantly to arbitrary imprisonment; in short, the *thing*, which now is, and which I need not name, *must continue*, or, my writings must have *their free course*, and I must have, as the just reward of my own talents, a greater fortune than the most of you have from those estates which you inherit from your ancestors. Provoking as this is to you; mortifying as it is to your insolent pride, you cannot help yourselves; nor can you show your resentment in any way, which will not make a fresh exposure of your folly and baseness.

In what I have said above, I by no means wish to be understood as meaning, that there are *none* amongst the magistrates, whose compassion one might not wish to have. The magistrates in *Monmouthshire*, those at *Reading*, and a Col. *Williams* in Lancashire, have shown that they still retain some sense of shame for the situation of their country. They, doubtless, begin to perceive that the present state of things is not to be temporary, if it be meant to remain until the People shall be content without a reform. They may begin to reflect that, in fact, all this abrogation of the law is for *your sakes*, and not for the sake of the peace of the country and the safety of the Throne. Men may be hardened up by their prejudices and their political anger; but, a time comes for *reflection*, and, if the gentlemen of England *reflect*, they will soon perceive that they are the first

to be sacrificed, seeing that *you* and the *Fundholders* will cling to each other to the last possible moment; because, as I believe at least, and as I most anxiously hope, your existence wholly depends on each other.

The project for *relieving the distresses* of the nation out of those very taxes. the raising of which *is the cause of those distresses*, is a strong symptom of the desperateness of your situation. The young patriotic Boroughmongers of Tavistock and Bedford may prate as long as they please about a "*moderate Reform*;" but, they will find that there must be no *middle course* pursued to put an end to the distresses which now press upon the nation, and in which the great mass of the People will become every day more and more *cool* as spectators. These distresses will take away the fortunes of the gentlemen who remain not ruined; they will sweat down the big and merciless yeomen; they will *erect out* completely every half-beggared, insolent fellow, who has been living upon war. The mass of the people must live. They all *hate you* to a man; and, in that hatred they will, ere long, be joined by many who now cling to your cause. All men say that there is something wrong somewhere, and every man will soon find out where it is.

In the Debate of the 28th of April, on a Petition from DUNFERLINE, there were some curious observations relative to the *interest of the Debt*; and the whole passage is so important that I shall transcribe it here for the purpose of putting it upon record.

"Lord COCHRANE rose, and said, that
" he had long resided in that neighbour
" hood, and he was sorry to be obliged
" to state, that the manufacturers there, in
" common with other manufacturers of

" the kingdom, had recently fallen into
" decay from the great taxation of the
" country; and, as long as pensions and
" places continued to be the reward of
" subservient persons, who totally disre-
" garded the liberties of the people, so
" long would those individuals be de-
" pressed. It was absolutely necessary
" that a Parliamentary Reform should
" take place; it was necessary that that
" House should be purged. (Hear, hear.)
" Unless this were effected all remedies
" would be inefficient, whether the Chan-
" cellor of the Exchequer applied two
" millions or fifty millions to the relief
" of the poor. Commerce and agriculture
" could only be revived by taking off that
" burden which now bore them down.
" He had recently been in the county of
" Kent, and it pained him exceedingly
" to see, that in almost all the mansions
" of the most ancient and respectable fa-
" milies, there was a bill that the house
" was either to be sold or let. Nothing
" could be done without a reduction of
" the National Debt; and, by resorting
" to that measure, he should like to know
" what injustice would be done to the
" country? Had we not found that the
" poor-rates were insufficient for the
" maintenance of the poor? And yet we
" must still keep up an enormous mili-
" tary establishment, merely *to keep down*
" *the lower classes of the people, who paid*
" *more on the malt tax, and salt-tax, and*
" *hops, than all the higher ranks put toge-*
" *ther.* There was a point, however,
" beyond which people could not endure
" their sufferings. He had that day seen
" people starving in the streets of the
" metropolis; he had seen others starving
" in the country, along the hedges and
" the highways. When the Chancellor
" of the Exchequer brought forward his
" motion for the relief of the poor, he

“should think it his duty to say something upon it; but, he did firmly believe that there was no class of men in the country more correct in their morals, or more loyal in their principles, than the present petitioners.

“MR. GRENFELL desired to trouble the House with a few words. The Noble Lord *had more than once proposed to them that the Government should be guilty of a breach of faith to the country.* He (Mr. G.) could not sit easy and hear a serious proposition of this nature made to them, without expressing his most decided disapprobation; and he would beg leave to add, that any such measure would be as contrary to national honour and policy as to every principle of justice. (Hear.)

“LORD COCHRANE explained, and declared his intention of stating hereafter whether this measure would be at all injurious to the national honour.

“LORD MILTON was much afraid that the Noble Lord (Cochrane) was not the only person who entertained such opinions. He thought it would be the greatest breach of public faith if those propositions were listened to, until we had arrived at a greater degree of distress than that which we had now to suffer, great and universal as he allowed it to be. (Hear.)

“MR. W. SMITH, having once or twice thrown out this hint himself, conceived that he might be one of the persons alluded to by the Noble Lord. All he meant to say, on the present occasion, was—for this important question could not be argued by a side wind—that he should have no hesitation, at a future time, of declaring his opinions on the subject.”

The sublime Lord MILTON has here declared, that, to reduce the interest would be a breach of national faith. No,

my Lord, “the nation’s best hope.” as the hired Burke called you; it would be no breach of *national* faith, for it has not yet been shown that the *nation* has borrowed the money. But, be this as it may, it will be a breach in the Borough System, and that you think, I dare say; for, to suppose that the grant to Burke’s executors, and that the pensions to the Elliots could continue to be paid, when it was found impossible to pay the interest of the Debt in full, is too absurd. In short, the Debt and the Boroughs mutually depend on each other.

This sublime Lord, however, who harps upon Mr. CROKER’s 250 pounds, while he says nothing of the thousands upon thousands paid to Burke’s Executors, does seem to speak on this tremulous subject with some little qualification. He says that “such a measure could not be resorted to till we were arrived at a much greater degree of distress than that which now prevailed in this country.” So! “the nation’s best hope” does, then, allow that there may be such a measure adopted, when the nation has arrived at a much greater degree of distress! This is the pinching point! This Debt, contracted for the putting down of freedom in France, and for the endeavour to put it down in America; this Debt, a great part of which can be traced to the pockets of you the Boroughmongers. and your dependants; this Debt, this friendly Debt, will, at last, give our country freedom.

The very task, of the matter, in this way, is a very ominous symptom. This Debt, my Lord Milton, is not to be gagged. Only two years ago you expressed your eager desire to “come to close quarters with the Reformers;” but, the moment they accepted your challenge, you called in the *Gens-d’armes*, and not only bound them to keep the peace, but gagged them into the bargain; and your beautiful aid-

de-camp, instead of answering our arguments, called them "*weekly venom*," and reported the necessity of new laws to make us hold our tongues! This was just what Burke did before him. He wrote a book; and, when his book was answered, and shown to be full of falsehood and folly, the pension-hunting slave called upon the *Attorney-General* to reply to his adversary! But, great Lord MILTON, you cannot silence the Debt in this way. There is no *gag* that will fit this devouring friend of Reform; and, the moment its demands are unsatisfied, it will set to work to inquire *who it is* that has received the money that was lent!

For my part, I never would consent to reduce the interest of the Debt one single fraction, until a *refunding* had taken place on the part of all those who have, without services, been pocketing the public money for the last forty or fifty years; and, I would make them give up interest as well as principal. This is so reasonable; it is so just; it is so obviously necessary to a fair and honest settlement of the account, that it always strikes every man as soon as the reduction of the interest of the Debt is mentioned. And this it is that alarms the Boroughmongers whenever that reduction is the subject of discussion. Discussed, however, the subject must be, and that, too, in a very short period.

It was discovered by the Committee of the House of Lords, that the *character* of the People had become *changed* since they had taken to reading *certain cheap publications*. This is a very bad symptom for the Boroughmongers. It must, according to all common estimate, have changed for the *better*; or else, what becomes of the thousands of printed statements of the good effects of the wondrous circulation of Bibles and Cheap Tracts? Here has been such a clutter about schools, and about mending the morals of the poor

by the means of *reading*, that one almost expected to see nothing like vice on the face of the earth. And, all of a sudden, the government is taken, as it were, in a *fit*, at the sight of a two-penny pamphlet! And every power that can be put in motion is exerted to *prevent reading*! The truth is that there is but too much reason to suspect that all these plans for teaching the people what is called *morality*, had their origin in the *fear* of their reading what might tend to render them *really enlightened*. It was perceived that the spirit of reading was abroad. It was perceived that the people *would read*; and the object of the Bible and other such like combinations was to prevent them from reading politics. It was hoped that, by feeding the children with little books about religion and morality, as they are called, they would be *prevented from seeking farther*. This was the foundation of all these Educating Societies; and the total failure of their object is one of the worst symptoms for you, for it is impossible for your usurpations to be long tolerated by a really enlightened people.

The People are now reduced to *silence*; but, it has been done by *force*; by mere force. There were no combinations against the form of government. There existed no desire to overthrow the government in King, Lords, and Commons. There was no ground for fear on the score of *revolutionary* views; but there was great and solid ground for fear on the score of the Boroughmongers and their families; for the people were, and are, bent upon a reform of this evil. The *talents*, too, which the people discovered, upon all occasions when they came forward, were such as to astound *you*. You called them *rabble*, and their speeches and resolutions you called *trash*; but you had sense enough to see, that this *trash* was such as you were unable to

come up to. You saw that political knowledge of the highest order was possessed in abundance by those whom your insolent pride had placed in the "*Lower Orders*;" that the leaders in the cause of Reform had eloquence as well as knowledge at command; and that it was impossible any longer to keep the people in the dark. While political discussions were confined to Palace Yard and to the Guildhall, where a few persons, long in the habit of addressing the people, repeated, time after time, the old commonplace complaints against Corruption, and where the business of the day generally ended in some vague statement of public wrongs: as long as political discussions were thus confined in their influence, you laughed at the efforts of the Reformers. But, when you saw the speeches and papers from Nottingham, Manchester, Bristol, Glasgow, Paisley; when you read those eloquent speeches and papers, abounding in information of all sorts, exhibiting novelty of idea, force of expression, depth of thought; when you saw at these and various other places, men *lamenting their want of education*, far surpassing in eloquence and political knowledge any of the *cocks* of the House of Commons; when you saw them seizing hold of, and clearly displaying all the causes, near and remote, of the nation's miseries; then you became alarmed for the safety of your emoluments, of which emoluments I spoke in the last number of this work.

The nature, extent, and effect of the Debt; the transactions of the Bank of England; the curious works of the East India Company; the effects of the changes in the value of the Paper-money; the amount, distribution, causes and effects of the taxes; the origin, progress, and result of pauperism. These were matters, of which you, and even the College Doctors, your Schoolmasters, had

only a vague notion. They were matters, to understand which required not only thought, but clear heads to think with. What, then, was your surprise and your affright, when you saw, that they were all well understood by those whom you called the "*Lower Orders*;" and whose capacities you had thought to be hardly sufficient to the clear comprehension of the story of the Babes in the Wood!

There were not wanting men to *envy* this proof of talent in the people at large, instead of seeing it with delight, as might have been expected in them. It seems, that they could not find in their hearts to part with their monopoly of talent of this kind! A most reprehensible weakness! It has, however, done no harm to the people's cause. It seemed to be too much for these persons to endure, to see rising up, all of a sudden, hundreds of men of greater talent than themselves. They saw, all at once, the public-papers filled with new names. Their own names they seldom saw in print. They sickened at the sight of the crowd of intruders. They felt conscious of their own want of capacity to retain their former planet-like station. They became *lukewarm*. They not only silently consigned over the Reformers to your tender mercy, but, as I verily believe, they secretly rejoiced at the silencing of their rivals, and that their joy surpassed even that of the sons and daughters of Corruption.

These envious persons, too, *look forward*, and calculate upon the consequences of a Reform *to themselves*. They clearly see, in spite of their vanity, that, if a Reform were actually to take place, *talents would predominate*, and that *names* would soon sink out of sight. They feel, that it would be impossible for them to be *at the head* of a real Common's House

of Parliament; and, therefore, it better suits them to have things in such a state, that they shall always have something to complain of. Protected from your fangs by their wealth or station, they can, with impunity, deal out their invectives against you, while men of greater talent are reduced to silence. This is precisely the state of things which suits their views. However, the time for putting their sincerity to the test is now come. There are great numbers of men actually in prison under the Absolute-power of imprisonment Act. If the men, whom I rather more than suspect of *secretly rejoicing* at this, now come forward, not with vague, loose, general charges against the Minister, on this score, but with *specific propositions*, naming the individuals who are in prison; defending their conduct manfully; demanding inquiry; and stating all they have heard as to each individual case; if they spend the time of the prerogation in visiting the spots where the prisoners have been said to have committed crimes, and in conversing with and succouring their parents and their wives and children: and if they meet the Ministers at the opening of the next session with distinct statements upon each case, in the form of resolutions, or otherwise: if they make diligent and personal inquiry into all the cases where the magistrates have bound men over, or sent them to prison, on the authority of Lord Sidmouth's Circular; if they succour those men, or their parents or wives and children; and, if they bring forward all their cases, with the *names* of all the parties concerned, and cause (as they may if they choose) a record of all these facts to be made, in the form of resolutions, in the Journals of the House of Commons: if they do these things, or, at least, if they perform this sacred duty to the ut-

most of their power; *then*, I shall declare my perfect conviction of their SINCERITY. But if they do none of this: if they deal in loose generalities; if they content themselves with pouring forth declamatory charges of oppression and tyranny against the Ministers; if they wait for the supplications of the prisoners or their families; if they suffer those supplications to lie unopened upon their tables for weeks; if they amuse themselves with playing at fives, with shooting, or with fox hunting, while the poor prisoners are groaning out their last breath in jail, and while their wives and children and parents are perishing in despair; *then* I shall be quite certain, that my suspicions of their INSINCERITY are well founded; I shall treat with scorn and contempt all the professions of these men of their love of liberty and of justice; and shall set them down amongst the basest of hypocrites.

I have recommended nothing here which is not practicable, and even *easy of performance*. A *tour* of a month would complete the business; *two thousand pounds* would succour all the distressed parties. And, besides, this would inspire life into the drooping hearts of these people, who, being closely related to the suffering prisoners, ought not to be considered as common paupers. I have here recommended nothing that I would not do myself. I should be ashamed to think of enjoying *amusement*, or of *amassing money*, while men were suffering for having acted upon the principles, which I had almost abused them, for years, for not acting on. Nothing is so great a consolation to a man who is shut up in a prison, as to know that his case is fairly stated to the world, and especially to know, that it is placed upon record in a way that gives him a chance of finally obtain-

ing justice. Nothing is more easy than for any Member of Parliament to obtain all the facts relative to the case of each of the State Prisoners. Industry and honest zeal only are wanted to put these in the form of *Resolutions*, which any member may move, and which, if only *seconded*, must be put on the Journals of the House. Is it not, therefore, a base desertion of duty to leave this undone, if a man has health and talent sufficient for the task, and if he profess to hold in abhorrence the power under which the Prisoners are suffering?

Distant as I am from the scene, and narrow as my means may be, it is still in my power to do more, in this respect, than, I am afraid, will be done by any body else, though I most anxiously hope that my fears may be groundless. In order that I may do all that I am able, I hereby request every man who is, or may be, shut up under the Absolute-Power-of-imprisonment Act; every man who may be imprisoned, or held to bail, under the authority of Lord Sidmouth's circular; every man who may have suffered under the Hawker's and Pedlar's Act for selling my writings; every man who may have suffered under the Sedition Bill; or, the retainers, or friends of every such man, to make out a full statement of his case, to relate the whole story, and to state all *times* and *names* which occur, and which it may be useful to have upon record.

1. The name of the suffering party.
2. The name, or names, of any magistrates, or others, concerned in the taking of him into custody.
3. The place where the suffering party resided, and the place and time of his being apprehended.
4. The jail where he is, or was confined, if imprisoned.
5. The sort of treatment he has received.

6. The amount of any fine, or bail.
7. Whether he has a wife and children, or aged parents.
8. His trade, or calling.
9. The circumstances of his family, or parents.
10. The nature of the offence alleged against him, if any has been alleged.
11. The name and place of abode of the person who makes the statement.
12. If there be any persons, who can give *evidence* as to the fact, their names should be put down, that we may one day or other call upon them.

When the statement is made out, let it be sent, by a private hand, if possible, to *The Publisher of my Pamphlet*, in London, sealed up and directed to WILLIAM COBBETT. Those statements will then reach me, in no very long time, and the parties shall hear from me without any expense to them. There are good men in England yet, who have hearts and purses too, and who think that the suffering State Prisoners ought to be as dear to them as the Prussians and Hanoverians, who were so liberally relieved by English subscriptions. I can write to some of these men. I can send them lists of the sufferers. There is one in particular, whom I never heard of till I arrived in this island, and who has most generously offered me pecuniary aid in case I stand in need of it. To this worthy gentleman I have only to say, that whatever he may be pleased to give in order to comfort the state prisoners, or their relatives, I shall look upon as given to *myself*. I have waited with some impatience to see a subscription opened in London for this purpose, and, unless it be done, the sufferers will, at any rate, know they have *nobody to thank*. For my own part, at present it is quite uncertain what means I shall have at my disposal. But I know

that I shall have my *liberty*, and full scope for my industry, *untaxed* and *untithed*. So will my sons; and we are not at all afraid of having some little matter which great frugality will enable us to spare; and, next after those who immediately depend upon us for food and raiment, the persons suffering under the above-mentioned acts have a claim upon us; and as our means shall enable us, we will afford them and their relatives succour. Therefore, I hope, that none of these parties will neglect to comply with my request in forwarding their statements in the manner before mentioned. I see by the London papers, that Mr. BENBOW, of Manchester, is imprisoned under the absolute-power-of-imprisonment act. I know Mr. BENBOW to be an honest, zealous, loyal, little fellow. So far from his being disposed to any acts of *treason*, I know that he was going to Lord Sidmouth, to state to him the real situation of the poor in Lancashire, and to beseech him to do something to cheer them, and to prevent their being thrown into confusion by despair. I myself advised him not to go, knowing that it would be useless. Mr. BENBOW is not a married man, I believe, but he may have an aged father, or mother; and, if that aged parent, or any friend of Mr. BENBOW will write to me, and tell me how the money is to be conveyed, I will take care that he or his parent, or friend for him, shall receive twenty guineas. Mr. KNIGHT, of Manchester, also is, it seems, in prison. I shall be glad to hear from any relation, or friend, of his; and to know whether I can be of any service to them, in any way, or to Mr. KNIGHT himself. These worthy men I look upon as having a claim upon me for any thing I can do for them, even though inconvenience, and some degree of suffering should thereby be produced to myself and my family. I myself am in

safety, thanks to this wise government, and brave people; but, I never can think, that I am not bound to feel for, and to assist, to the utmost of my power, those of my countrymen who have fallen within that grasp from which I had the good fortune to escape. I should look upon it as unfeeling, and even as criminal, if I were to enjoy any thing beyond mere necessities, while they and their wives and children are in want and misery.

For these reasons I most earnestly beg them to make known to me their situations, in the manner before pointed out. Besides, it is necessary to collect the facts now, while all the parties are *alive*. Some of these poor souls will, I dare say, *die in prison*; but, by having their names, and all the circumstances on record, we shall, at any time, be able to bring their cases forward, and to obtain justice, one day or other, on any one, who may have acted illegally towards them. The statements will all remain safe in my possession, to be brought forth whenever the proper time shall arrive; and, if I should not then be alive, my sons, or one of them, I dare say, will; and, I trust, that neither of them will fail to act as their father would have acted. The writers of the several statements, may rely upon their names not being made public. Their papers will all reach me, in spite of every thing that can be done to prevent it. I will arrange them all properly, and will prepare the several cases for being brought forward when the time for doing it shall arrive. The statements should mention the names, not only of the parties immediately concerned in doing the things above mentioned; but also the names of any *persecuting individuals*, who may have aided or encouraged men in any oppressive acts. The importance of collecting and preserving these facts is so obvious, that I will not suppose it

necessary to say any more upon the subject.

Another branch of information is also to be attended to; that is, the conduct of the several Benches of Magistrates, or of particular Magistrates, with regard to Lord Sidmouth's circular. It will be valuable for us to possess the Speeches of Chairmen of Quarter Sessions, and their charges to Grand Juries, upon the subject of that Circular. If these be inserted in the Provincial Papers, they may be forwarded to my Publisher. Otherwise sketches of them may be sent in writing. Besides these, it will be desirable to possess the names, and place of abode of any individuals, who, by the turning off of tradesmen, workmen, or by any other acts, have shown, or shall show, themselves to be *persecutors* of the People, and aiders and abettors of the Boroughmongers.

I should be very much obliged to any one, who would forward to me, through the same channel, the Christian and Surnames of all those persons, who have been *Governors and Directors of the Bank of England*, and of the *East India Company*, since the year 1792; and, if possible, of all those who have been *Army Contractors* since that period. These will be necessary to a true history of these times; and, I pledge myself to give them all their suitable place in that true history.

And now, my good Boroughmongers, in returning from this long digression, let me ask you what you flatter yourselves will be *your lot*, at the conclusion of the grand drama? You will retort, perhaps, and ask me, *what I think it will be*? To which I answer, that I cannot precisely say what it will be; but that I do really believe it will be rather "*unsatisfactory*." You must efface all traces of recollection from the minds of the people of England,

before you can hope to be forgiven. You have been the cause of more misery than sword or pestilence ever produced. I looked upon the lightning, on board the importer, which threatened us all with instant death, as more kind and friendly towards us, than you have been, and are, towards the people of that country, which was once so happy, and which is now so miserable. There is very little distinction to be made between you. There are some of you who play the farce of pretending to disapprove of the act of power-of-imprisonment, while you *hold boroughs*! You *must* be hypocrites in this respect; for, it would be impossible to hold the boroughs for any length of time, without an army such as now exists, and without the absolute power-of-imprisonment act lodged in the hands of somebody. It was not main force that you had to dread; not open insurrection; not open battle in arms; but, it was the force of argument, the power of reasoning, the operations of the *mind* of the nation. These were what you had to dread; and these were all advancing against you so fast; they were surrounding you on every side, and circumventing you in every root, with such force that you could not have stood another year, without the recent measures. This you saw very clearly; and, therefore, for *any of you* to pretend to *disapprove* of those measures, must be downright hypocrisy, unless your disapproval had been accompanied with an offer to *surrender your boroughs*. When I hear the Russells and Bennets, at the Westminster dinner, professing their abhorrence of the recently passed acts of parliament, when I hear them exclaiming against *gags*, I should like to ask them, whether they are ready to approve of the giving up of the *boroughs*? whether they are ready to rely solely upon the *unbought voices of the electors* for their seats in par-

liament? whether they are, in short, ready to vote for a law which shall give to every man a vote who pays a tax? whether they are ready to vote, actually vote, for a law, that shall leave the nobility nothing but what really belongs to them; that is to say, their hereditary legislature, and that shall give up the commons house to the fair and impartial race of integrity and talent? I should like to put this question to them; and if they answered, that they were ready to do all this, I, on my part, should be ready to confess, that I was most agreeably surprised! Oh, no! This is not what they mean. They merely mean to make the people believe, that they wish for what the people wish for; and this we have a right to conclude against every one who talks about being a friend to the liberties of the country, and who still holds a borough; for, indeed, what can be more ridiculous than to profess an indignation against robbery, while the party has not only a part of the stolen goods in his possession, but while he perseveres in keeping it? "Restitution or damnation" is the maxim of the catholic priests in the taking of the confession of thieves and fraudulent persons. But these repentant boroughmongers seem to expect to secure their salvation *without making restitution*. They will be deceived; for now-a-days there is not a single man in all England who does not well know, that it is the borough system to which the nation owes all its miseries.

Is it possible, that such a nation can have been reduced to such a state *without a cause*? What is it that has produced that universal beggary, that starvation, those suicides and untimely deaths, those innumerable thefts and murders, which now affect and disgrace the land? It is the poverty of the great mass of the peo-

ple; this has been produced by the taxes; these are demanded by the army and the debt, and these have been created by *your influence*. You, therefore, have been the real cause of all the calamities; and this is now as well known and understood as the cause of the blood proceeding from a cut by a knife. It is clear to every man, that if the *people* had been fully and fairly represented, this army and this debt would have not now existed. There was no motive other than that of securing your power, for any of the wars of the last fifty-six years. This country, America, must have become independent in the course of ages, but it was your oppressions that accelerated the event, and which thereby produced a new power in the world to face England upon the seas. *Taxation without representation* was what you then contended for; and it is what you contend for now. We are now engaged in the *old* quarrel with you, and you are endeavouring, for the first time, during profound peace, to defeat us by a suspension of all the remaining liberties of the country.

In this country, there are men heartily devoted to our cause, who, nevertheless, *despair*. But these men do not perceive the *novelty of your situation*. They say, that *former* efforts against you have all *failed*. This is not correct. The efforts against you in *this country* did not fail. Besides, though men have *written* and *talked*, for a great many years past, against you, when did they write, or talk, with such effect, as *of late*? When were there eloquent and well-informed men *before* rising up in crowds amongst the people themselves, without any participation of those who call themselves the "*higher orders*?" When did a million and a half of men *before* petition for a Reform, and trace, in their petitions, all their ca-

lamities to this source? When, *before*, were you compelled to resort to measures, such as are now in force, in order to stifle the voice of the people? When did the Parliament *before* pass laws upon such Reports? When was the press *before* subjected to any thing so near to direct *Bourbon Censorship*? When was the Parliament *before* compelled to issue Exchequer Bills in aid of the poor rates? When were there, *before*, a debt requiring 44 millions annually to pay the interest, and an army in time of peace requiring nearly 20 millions more, annually, with a revenue falling short of 40 millions and daily decreasing.

These are all *novelties* in your situation. They are so many circumstances hostile to you, and, of course, favourable to the people, who have nothing to do but to remain tranquil for a year or two, and let you proceed. The thing will cure itself. Corruption will eat out Corruption. One class after another will fall into misery, 'til, in a short time, the state of things will be such as for it to be impossible to hold the system together. Those who, from folly, or false fear, or false pride, now hang on to your skirts, will be shaken off, or, rather, they will drop off from their feebleness. You will daily find, that such persons begin to discover, that they have been sacrificed for *your* sakes only, and that of your associates, the fundholders, contractors, and loan-jobbers. 'Til, at last, you will have nobody but yourselves, and those whom you are able to *purchase*, to support your cause. In short, the question still is, whether you can carry on *your* system after the Funding System is destroyed; for the time of its destruction must come. This is the question; and, to know how this question is to be decided, there only wants *time*; and that, too, no very long time.

There are some men, in America, and great numbers, too, who, from father to son, have *always* been what is called *friends of England*. These men, from a spirit natural to every opposition, have constantly confounded the *English* government with the *English* nation. The

whole put together they have called England. Their opponents have also fallen into a like confusion of ideas. The former have contended that all was always *right* in England; and the latter the contrary. But, there has, of *late*, been a great change in the language of the former. *Loose complaints* and *invectives* had no weight with them. They easily reconciled their minds to acts, however severe, against "the friends of Bonaparte;" against "*Jacobins* and *Atheists*." But, *now*, when they know that Napoleon is a captive in our hands, *now*, when we have put an end to all war, and all danger of war; *now*, when we are at peace with all the world; *now*, to see the present system adopted, a thousand times more severe than at any period of war; *now*, when it is quite impossible for any man to pretend that we have one grain of freedom left; or that it is probable that a time will ever come for the restoration of our freedom; *now*, when the ministers have the absolute power of punishing, and when even the inferior magistrates have a like power, without any *trial at all*, to say nothing about *trial by jury*. NOW, these men, hereditarily the obstinate defenders of all the acts of the English government, behold these things, and when they, who are generally by nature compassionate, see in the proceedings of the Parliament itself the undeniable proofs of the people of their favourite England being reduced to a state of misery such as never before affected the heart of humanity; NOW, these men begin to confess, there is SOMETHING AMISS! They are loath to join their adversaries in condemning you; but, at the least they cease to *defend* you. They keep silence, shrug up their soldiers, hope that the calamity and disgrace are but *temporary*; but, at the bottom of their hearts, repent of ever having been your friends and eulogists. This is the commencement of a most material change in this important part of the world, which has its influence on every other part, and which change is precisely of the same sort as that which is going on at this moment amongst the good men, in England itself, who have

confounded *your interests* with those of *the King and the People*, who have hitherto thought that *loyalty and love of country* consisted of those principles and acts which really had for their object and end solely *your exclusive* benefit and aggrandizement.

Thus, as your pecuniary means will decrease, your friends will also decrease, and you will find your troubles and your dangers daily grow upon you, until the day will arrive, when you will have reason to repent, that you did not, in time, yield that which never was your own. The Reformers have nothing to do but to wait with patience. Above all things, not to suffer themselves to be cajoled into any acquiescence in what are called *moderate* Reformers. Not to be deceived by specious high-sounding *talk* from those who *do nothing*. Not to be the tools of the tools of artful pretenders to public spirit. Let them watch the *actions* of men: Let them keep their eye upon who it is that *succours the prisoners and their families*, and who brings forward their cases in a plain and bold manner, and causes them to be put upon record; and let them not give their honest and credulous hearts to the utterers of *big words* about oppression and tyranny, who, in quitting the forum, retire to the five-court in Bond-street, to the Gaming House, a little lower down, or to the jovial Fox-Chase, or Shooting Party, while the poor sufferers are pining out their souls in a jail, without knowing the cause of their imprisonment, or being able to guess at the time of their deliverance.

Let the people act thus, and lie quietly upon their oars. Let them join in no *sham whig* meetings; give their sanction to none of those who would slacken the cords in order to take a fresh purchase and bind them up for ever. Let them suspect the sincerity of every one, who talks of any thing short of annual parliaments, and a vote for every sane man twenty-one years of age. Let them yield not one jot of their rights, and to them, to you, and to all parties, complete justice will be done in a very, very few years.

WM. COBBETT.

POST SCRIPT.—I see, that it is stated in the London papers, that *Young Watson* is in the United States of America. A little while back, I heard that he was in this country, but that he went under a *borrowed name*. Upon asking the reason why he did not go by his own name, the answer was, that he was afraid of being claimed *by the English government* in virtue of a treaty between the two countries. This is a mistake. There was a treaty, made in 1794, which enabled the two governments reciprocally to claim the surrender of *murderers and forgers*. This treaty is no longer in existence; and, if it were, it could, in no sense, apply to Mr. WATSON. This stipulation, though, upon the face of it, very fair and just, was one of a very dangerous tendency; for though the article took care that no man should be surrendered, except upon *proof*, produced in a court of justice, in the country where he was found, that he had been guilty of the crime alleged, and that too in the construction of the laws of *that country*; yet, there was the want of fair trial of this proof, because, while a vindictive government might easily find evidence to send over in support of the charge, the accused party would have no means of bringing evidence in his defence, being at such a distance from all his friends, and all who might be able to prove his innocence. He would, indeed, have a *trial for murder or forgery* after he got home; and, if innocent, would, we will say, be acquitted of that crime; but, he might immediately be *detained* and tried for *sedition or treason*. A surrender of fugitives never *until now*, made part of the compacts even between the sovereigns of Europe; and, I am quite sure, that no particle of such a horrid system will ever again be given into by America. However, this treaty has long since been at an end; and, as far as related to *forgers*, it was, I believe, never acted upon. It would have been shocking indeed if it had; for, it would have been, on the part of this country, surrendering up a man to suffer death for a crime,

which, in no case, is punished with death in this country. But, even if the treaty were still in being, Mr. WATSON's case, supposing him to have seriously wounded PLATT, (which I never believed,) never could have come within the meaning of that treaty, which speaks of persons, charged with *murder* or *forgery*. Now, it is very well known, that PLATT is *alive*; and, it is also well known, that to make out a charge of murder there must be a *death* upon the spot or *ensuing* directly from the act. I never believed, nor do I believe it now, that PLATT was ever seriously hurt. I said this in print in England. I challenged the *Courier* to bring forth the *surgeon's* certificate.—There was an account of a ball *not extracted*. Timid people were kept in alarm for a long time with the most shocking description of the sufferings of poor PLATT; but, after we had been told of the *discharges* of the wound for six or seven weeks, and after the *Acts* were *passed*, the thing *died wholly away*. Mr PLATT became well nobody knew very well how, and, in all the trials of the rioters, not one word of evidence came out as to this most mortal wound, the existence of which was never certified by any surgeon from the beginning to the end, an omission that was never known to take place before on any similar occasion. The public were favoured with not one word upon the subject, first or last, under the hand of *Mr. Platt* himself, or of any of his numerous relations, though his father-in-law was living within a few yards of the spot, where the act was said to have been committed, and though he is a man, I was informed, upon whose word the public would have placed a firm reliance.

Mr. Platt, they told us, escaped over a *high wall* after he had received the "mortal wound." We were told by the hirelings themselves, that *Mr. Watson*, as soon as he had shot off the pistol, and upon hearing *Platt* say that he was shot, exclaimed: "I am an *unfortunate young man*: let me *dress your wound*:" and yet, this young man was called a *murderer*, an *assassin*, a *bloody monster*, an-

other *Robespierre*; and thus were the people of the whole country endeavoured to be thrown into a state of alarm. The hirelings stated, too, that the business of *Mr. Watson* and his associates was to *obtain arms* to go and attack the *tower*, and that *Platt* first seized hold of *Watson* to take him into custody, yet, this latter, when he had shot off his pistol, or when the pistol had gone off, exclaimed: "I am an *unfortunate young man*; I am a *surgeon*; let me examine *your wound*," and, in the face of this, their own account, they call this young man a *murderer* and an *assassin*, though the man he is said to have shot is still *alive*, and though the act was committed (if committed at all) not only in open day, and before hundreds of witnesses, but in order to *resist an attempt to take him prisoner*. But, these words were merely made use of as the words *Jacobin* and *disaffected* and *blasphemous* and *seditious* are: they are words intended to deceive the ignorant and alarm the timid.

I think it likely that *Mr. Platt* received something of a hurt; and, perhaps, his fears argumented his danger, but, I do not believe, that he received any serious wound; and, as to a *bullet*, the surgeon, I believe, might have looked for a bullet in his body with as little chance of success as the noble Duke of Montrose and his co-adjutor, *Lord James Murray*, looked for a bullet in the prince's bullet-proof coach.

However, *Mr. Watson* is able to *clear this matter up*, and I hope he will come forward in his own proper name and do it. His father is, I see, by this time, tried for *high treason*! the son has now a duty to perform, the most imperative that can exist: that of rescuing from dishonour the name of his father; and of a father, too, who, from every account from every quarter, has borne, throughout life, the character of a most virtuous, kind, and humane man. Indeed, it was his humanity, which, in all likelihood, has produced his late misfortunes; for, his time was, in great part, devoted to the assistance, which, as a surgeon, he gave to the poor and friendless. Perhaps, before this

time, he may have added one to the long list of those who, during the present reign, have been sentenced to be hanged, but not 'til dead, and to have their live bowels ripped out, to have their four quarters separated, and to have them placed at his Majesty's disposal. But, such was the sentence on Russell and on Sidney, except that they had the favour to have their heads chopped off; and yet, their descendants are Dukes and Lords. We are not, therefore, upon the bare ground of this sentence, if it should take place, to conclude, that it is improper for *any one* to explain satisfactorily, if he be able, the conduct of Dr. WATSON; and, it is so far from being improper in his son, that it is his bounden duty to the memory of his father. Besides, the *son himself* is, it seems, tried by this time, for the same offence; and, if found guilty, he will be condemned, and will be outlawed. It behooves him, therefore, on his own account, to come forward, and to make his defence before the world, and particularly in the face of that nation, amongst whom he has sought refuge.

For my own part, being satisfied that Mr. WATSON, if he really did wound *Platt* at all, never premeditated any such act; having seen, in the confessions of the very hirelings themselves, that he could not have thought of committing a murder, or of doing harm to any individual; having seen, that every one who knew him spoke of him as being a very humane though enthusiastic young man; being thoroughly convinced that he had no treasonable designs in view; and knowing that he has been, by the ex-

ecrable London press, most foully calumniated, I shall be perfectly ready, if he be in this country, to afford him any assistance in my power, in the circulation of any statement that he may think proper to make upon his subject, so interesting to the nation to which he belongs, and to that which has given him protection; so deeply affecting the character of his father and himself, and so important in every point of view.

To this end, I shall be glad to see him at my house as soon as he can make it convenient. Faithful to the settled laws of my country, I will never abet or countenance any conspiracy, direct or indirect, against the King and his family, or their well-known and lawful authority; but a man may "faithful and true allegiance bear to our Sovereign Lord the "King," and yet may be very impatient under certain acts of his Ministers; and may entertain a mortal hatred of trafficking in seats in Parliament. In other words, a man may be indiscreetly eager to obtain a reform of the Parliament, without being a *traitor*. And, as to *enthusiasm*, so far from its being a disrecommutation with me, it is, on the contrary, the very quality which, of all others, is now most wanted in our country. If Mr. Watson is here, he is safe; and, if he should see himself held forth as a *traitor* in the London newspapers, he may easily console himself with the reflection, that, in this respect, he only shares with General Washington, John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, Dr. Franklin, and hundreds of others, now living, or lately living, in these States. W. C.

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Published by H. Cobbett, at Cobbett's Register Office, No. 19 Wall-street.